

“Our processes are not organic. Getting the right people, with the right skills and education, in the right jobs, is NOT organic. It’s strategic.” That’s where this story begins, *The Weekly Win* for March 29, 2017.

### **Rehabilitation through Innovation**

Workforce, workforce, workforce. Society’s migraine? Workforce. Where can we find people, good people, qualified people, reliable people, for our jobs? Unfortunately, as a Country, our workforce issues have been nearly forty years in the making. From a community perspective, to think that this matter can be resolved within ninety days is simply not rational. But, I do believe it can be addressed, and show substantial progress, within the next three years. To do this, we have to think differently. As I am quick to tell people, “Our processes are not organic. Getting the right people, with the right skills and education, in the right jobs, is NOT organic. It’s strategic.”

If a company within your community states that they need one hundred fifty people. Guess what? That means that they need one hundred fifty REAL people. It’s not like a ‘herd’ will suddenly emerge and we all go, “Oh, there they are. We’re all good now. Thanks!” The people that you need are real. And, if you need one hundred fifty people, then you have to find one hundred fifty people, one person at-a-time. That’s how you solve the workforce issue in your community. How well do you know your people? And, by people, I mean ALL of them. Every person, at every level.

Recently, I’ve had multiple conversations throughout the County of Crawford and the Meramec Region about the transitional workforce within the area. Specifically, where are they and how can we re-introduce them to the workforce? During these discussions, residents (inmates) of jail and prison facilities were discussed on multiple occasions. The idea was brought up to have these individuals take the Work Keys assessment so that they might attain a National Career Readiness Certificate. Then, the idea surfaced.

What if, instead of testing them only, we took the time to encourage them? I asked, “What if they took the five week Entrepreneurship program, and as a component of the program, they take the Work Keys assessment? People have used the Entrepreneurship program to find a new career, to start a new company, to expand an existing business, to perform better at their current position, to problem-solve current organizational issues, to create more personal income, and to find a better place in life. Let’s try it in this setting.”

In conjunction with multiple partners at the city, county, regional, state, and federal levels, the Crawford County Sheriff and I are piloting a program beginning next week, *Rehabilitation through Innovation*. Participants of the program will participate in a five week Entrepreneurship and Innovation program. The program has five educational goals: (1) Help the participants understand that entrepreneurship is a mindset, not an occupation. (2) Enable the participants to develop an entrepreneurial mindset while connecting their world to the world around them. (3) Provide a positive, quality learning

experience so that vital business and life skills begin to emerge for each participant. (4) Program participants will be provided information and insight, and Work Keys assessments, to assist them with workforce options and opportunities. (5) The program will show the participants, how their knowledge and skills, applies directly to their future workforce opportunities.

The program is also designed to focus on the well-being of the individuals that participate. This program is an excellent motivational tool that provides ample opportunity for goal-setting strategies. We are real people, living in real environments, and we all face real challenges and opportunities for growth. Per this, the program doesn't ignore the human element. We address failure, we talk openly about past mistakes, and we focus on an improved and confident self. Through this, the program helps the participants to recognize a new and more opportunistic future. Additionally, the program will provide the participants the opportunity to attain the National Career Readiness Certificate.

There will be three programs offered, a program for males, a program for females, and a program for those on probationary supervision (with a specific focus on drug court). Upon completion, we cannot guarantee that these individuals will immediately become contributing members of society. I wish I could, but I can't make that guarantee. But, I can attest that the participants will have completed the Entrepreneurship and Innovation program, they will have taken the Work Keys assessment, and hopefully they will have attained the National Career Readiness Certificate.

It's a pilot program, we'll learn a lot through the experience, we'll learn quickly, we'll pivot when and where it's necessary, and we'll keep improving as we move forward.

Much more to come, many more wins to share. 😊